



March 22, 2007

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Commissioners

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director

RE: Safe Routes to Transit Letter of Support, Agenda Item 9

Dear Commissioners:

### **Executive Summary**

The Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) and the East Bay Bicycle Coalition (EBBC), working in conjunction with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has issued a second Call-for-Projects to distribute \$4 million in Regional Measure 2 Funds as part of the Safe Routes to Transit Program. This program seeks to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to regional transit facilities that have a “bridge nexus.” In the first round of funding for this program Marin County applicants were shut out and program funding was awarded elsewhere. To avoid repetition of this outcome, staff initiated discussion with the Executive Committee of a TAM role in formulating and implementing a successful application strategy. The result of this discussion was an Executive Committee recommendation that, until the process for more explicit definition of TAM roles and responsibilities is complete, the Board of Commissioners should limit TAM participation to letters of support for selected candidate projects.

**Recommendation: That the TAM Board authorize the Executive Director to sign letters of support for candidate projects likely to compete successfully for funding under the Regional Safe Routes to Transit program.**

### **Background**

Funded by passage of the \$1 state bridge toll increase contained in Regional Measure 2 (RM2), the Safe Routes to Transit (SR2T) Program provides \$20 million over 10 years for bicycle and pedestrian projects improving access to regional transit facilities. The East Bay Bicycle Coalition (EBBC), and the Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) were selected to work with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to coordinate funds and administer calls-for-projects for the SR2T program. Candidate projects must have a “bridge nexus,” meaning that they provide better access for transbay transit passengers, fully integrating pedestrian and bicycle modes .

Four million dollars of the funds were made available for a first round of projects selected in 2005. While Marin jurisdictions prepared applications on behalf of several candidates for the 2005 funds, none of these applications were successful. A second \$4 million call-for-projects has now been issued with an application deadline of April 3. Because Marin is a major contributor to the toll stream on the Richmond–San Rafael Bridge, TAM staff contends that the county

deserves a share of the funding in this program. Since the selection criteria contain no specific requirements for geographic equity, however, Marin has no guarantee of success in this process unless an effective application strategy is formulated. With that in mind, staff initiated discussion with the TAM Executive Committee on several key strategic questions whose answers could contribute to a successful application process.

## **Discussion**

TAM staff submitted three procedural options to the Executive Committee at its March 14 meeting:

- TAM submits the SR2T funding application in cooperation and coordination with the local entity responsible for the project, prioritizing candidates for all of Marin County
- TAM supplies a letter of support in response to a request by the local agency submitting the application for program funds.
- The local agency submits applications for the grant program, with TAM having no specific role. Processes for a number of other federal and state grant programs follow this option.

The TAM Board and staff have initiated a process for explicitly defining TAM roles and responsibilities. One of the specific items to be addressed in this process is TAM's role in pursuing funding opportunities of this kind. But this definition process will not be complete until after the deadline for submittal of SR2T applications. Therefore, the Executive Committee recommended that TAM confine its participation in the current round of applications to letters of support for candidate projects.

So far, staff has identified three Marin County candidates for SR2T funding:

1. City of San Rafael—Mission to Heatherton bike/ped facility improvements. This closes the gap created when the Lincoln Hill multi-use path is complete (part of the Hwy 101 Puerto Suello Hill Gap Closure project). The project carries bicycles and pedestrians to the Bettini Transit Center on Heatherton from where the Class I path ends at Mission. The applicant for funds, consistent with Executive Committee Recommendations, would be the City of San Rafael.
2. City of Fairfax - Center Blvd Transit Center improvements. This project enables better bicycle, pedestrian and ADA access in and out of the transit bus hub at the Fairfax Parkade. The applicant for funds, consistent with Executive Committee Recommendations, would be by the City of Fairfax.
3. Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Access Improvements. MTC is completing a Project Study Report (planning study) examining options for providing a bike/pedestrian pathway on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. The next phase of work, Environmental Documentation and Design could start as early as this June. TAM staff envisioned an application for necessary support funds from the SR2T program. No local applicant for funds for this project has been identified.

The Executive Committee made no specific recommendation covering the number of SR2T applications to be submitted from Marin County although significant discussion has taken place about the strategy of focusing on one strong application vs. supporting any number that might be submitted by local jurisdictions. MTC planning staff believes that candidate #1 is the strongest of the three current candidates because it has the strongest "bridge nexus" (direct bicycle/pedestrian connection to buses across the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge), it has strong potential for leveraging matching funds through the Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP) and it closes an important gap in the bicycle/pedestrian network. Candidate #2 is less strong, according to MTC planning staff, because transbay travel from the Fairfax facility would

require a transfer in Downtown San Rafael and because the facility would be served by only one full service bus route traveling there. Candidate #3 is, perhaps, the least likely successful candidate because the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge planning effort has yet to identify a preferred and fundable alternative. Absent this step, granting funds for environmental documentation and design would, according to MTC planning staff, likely be considered premature.

**Recommendation: That the TAM Board authorize the Executive Director to sign letters of support for candidate projects likely to compete successfully for funding under the Regional Safe Routes to Transit program.**